



1/025 Media and Communications

Objective

This Policy establishes protocols for the Town of Port Hedland's official communications with our community to ensure the Town is professionally and accurately represented and maximises a positive public perception of the organisation.

This Policy also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Elected Members and the Chief Executive Officer when speaking publicly/issuing public statements.

Content

The Media Communications Policy sets out clear, consistent protocols for all contact with media which are to be followed by the Mayor, Elected Members, Chief Executive Officer and employees of the Town of Port Hedland and has been established to:

1. Formalise the roles of the Mayor, Elected Members, Chief Executive Officer and employees in relation to media communications;
2. Maintain positive, quality and timely communications with the media even during adverse media attention;
3. Ensure the Town's affairs and activities are fairly and accurately reported in the media;
4. Proactively represent the Town in media communications;
5. Ensure communication with the media is consistent, in line with the Town's strategic direction, and aligned with the Town's communication strategies;
6. Ensure that media communication with the Town is following relevant statutory provisions;
7. Provide the information required by law to be publicly available;
8. Share information that is of interest and benefit to the community;
9. Promote Town of Port Hedland events and services;
10. Promote Public Notices and community consultation/engagement opportunities;
11. Answer questions and respond to requests for information relevant to the role of the Town of Port Hedland; and
12. Receive and respond to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

The Town will use this Policy to assist the Mayor, Elected Members, Chief Executive Officer and employees in understanding the correct communication processes when handling media enquiries, identifying spokespersons for media interviews, preparing media statements and making comments to the media.



Official Communications

The Town's official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards, and the positions adopted by the Council. The Town's communications will always be respectful and professional.

The Town will use a combination of different communication modes to suit the type of information to be communicated and the requirements of the community or specific audience, including:

- Town of Port Hedland website;
- Advertising and promotional materials;
- Media releases prepared for the Town to promote specific Town positions;
- Social media; and
- Community newsletters, letter drops, and other modes of communications undertaken by the Town's Administration at the Chief Executive Officer's direction.

The Town will maintain an official website as the community's online resource to access the Town's official communications.

Commitment

The Town of Port Hedland is committed to open, transparent procedures and being fully accountable to the media and the wider community. Therefore, it wishes to provide the media with information about projects and initiatives and respond to media enquiries in a thorough and timely manner.

The Town aims to maximise its media exposure by:

- Demonstrating that it is an open and accessible local government authority;
- Providing accurate information to the media promptly;
- Showing that it is always keen to respond to media enquiries; and
- Building positive relationships with persons in the print and electronic media.

Speaking on behalf of the Town of Port Hedland

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Town of Port Hedland and may represent the Town in official communications, including; speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media. *[s.2.8(1)(d) of the Local Government Act 1995]*.

Where the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the spokesperson. *[s.2.9 and s.5.34 of the Local Government Act 1995]*.



The Chief Executive Officer may speak on behalf of the Town of Port Hedland if authorised to do so by the Mayor. [s.5.41(f) of the *Local Government Act 1995*].

The provisions of the Local Government Act 1995 direct that only the Mayor, or the Chief Executive Officer, if authorised, may speak on behalf of the Local Government. It is respectful and courteous to the Office of Mayor for others to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until the Mayor has had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Town.

Communications by Elected Members, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as personal communication, must not:

- Bring the Town of Port Hedland into disrepute;
- Compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Town of Port Hedland;
- Imply the Town of Port Hedland's endorsement of personal views; or
- Disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact meetings that relate to the official business of the Town of Port Hedland.

Elected Member communications must comply with the Town of Port Hedland's Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

Media Enquiries

The Town will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of information contravenes the Town's duty of care, contractual obligations, a legal issue or could infringe laws or regulations that govern its operations or the privacy of any individual.

Media enquiries will be dealt with promptly, honestly and within the media representative's deadline wherever possible.

All media enquiries must be directed to the Town's Manager Corporate Affairs in the first instance, whereby information will be coordinated to support the release of an official response on behalf of the Town.



Social Media

Conduct

All elected representatives and employees should be cognisant that their conduct when using digital communications reflects upon them and their position in either a personal or official capacity.

All elected representatives and employees should be aware that many search engines record online content and that the content of posts and discussions may be publicly available and searchable into the future.

Guidelines for Elected Members

Elected Members are not permitted to establish official social media tools for communications with the community.

Elected Members are authorised to establish and maintain personal social and digital media tools however must not use the title of "Councillor" in the name of any account, profile or page established.

Elected Members should not make comments about the Town of Port Hedland, its elected representatives and staff or its partners and stakeholders on their personal social media tools.

Guidelines for Employees

The Town uses Social Media and maintains Social Media accounts to facilitate information sharing and provide feedback to our community. Social Media will not be used by the Town to communicate or respond to matters related to a person's or entity's private affairs.

The Town will, at its discretion, moderate its Social Media accounts to address, and where necessary delete, content deemed to be:

- Offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading;
- Soliciting or commercial in nature;
- Unlawful or which may incite others to break the law;
- Information that may compromise individual or community safety or security;
- Repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated;
- Electioneering for Council, appointment to official Office, or any ballot;
- In violation of intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; and
- Inappropriate in any other way.



Where a third party contributor to a Town's Social Media account is identified as posting content that is in accordance with the above, the Town may, at its discretion, hide that contributor's comment and block that contributor for a specific period of time or permanently.

In conjunction with other communication modes, the Town will use Social Media to communicate and advise the community regarding Emergency Management.

The CEO will determine the authorised contributors for the Town of Port Hedland accounts.

Town employees may maintain their own personal social media accounts and tools. It is the Town of Port Hedland's preference that employees do not initiate social media discussions on work-related matters.

If personally approached online regarding a work matter, employees should immediately inform their supervisor and seek advice on how to reply in a way that positively reflects the Town of Port Hedland.

Supporting Guidelines

This policy's implementation is supported through relevant internal operating procedures and the Town's Code of Conduct.

Definitions

“Media” refers to methods of communication with media outlets such as media releases, media responses, interviews, photo opportunities.

“Social Media” refers to web-based technology which facilitates the communication and sharing of text, photos, audio, video and information in general.

“Employee” refers to permanent, part time, casual or contracted Council Officer.

<i>Relevant legislation</i>	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
<i>Delegated authority</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Business unit</i>	<i>Corporate Affairs</i>
<i>Directorate (choose one)</i>	<i>Office of the CEO</i>



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